

12 May 2022

Dear Residents, Families and Friends of Illawarra Diggers

**Re: 2022 Reaccreditation of Illawarra Diggers**

Many of you will already know that Residential Aged Care homes in Australia are regulated by and accredited (or licensed to operate and receive Commonwealth funding) based on a system of review under the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's authority.

In July 2019, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission ("the Commission") introduced a thoroughly reviewed and rewritten set of Standards (eight standards in total comprising 42 required outcomes) that residential aged care homes must comply with to ensure the health and safety of all care recipients. Compliance with these standards is also mandatory for ongoing funding to provide residential care.

The standards reinforce the resident as the central focus of all aspects of the home's policies and procedures. For some homes, these "new" standards required a significant change in philosophy and for others, a minor realignment with the specifics of the new requirements. Since homes have begun being assessed under these new standards, the public has become increasingly aware of sanctions being imposed against homes across the country as well as the Illawarra. The standard to which homes are now being held is significantly higher than under the previous legislation and has led to a new "normal", whereby homes are most likely to be found to have Not Met 3, 6 or even 12 of the 42 requirements during their reaccreditation audit. This leads to significant reviews of policies, procedures, staffing and leadership in the affected organisations, as well as cost.

Illawarra Diggers were due to receive a full reaccreditation audit in late 2020. Due to Covid-19, homes around the country were prioritised and some deferred. Illawarra Diggers received three 6 month extensions to our accreditation as our past history of compliance and annual mini-audits would have placed us as a lower priority for review.

On Monday 4 April, four assessors from the Commission arrived unannounced at our home. Many of you will have received correspondence at the time advising you that the Assessors were on site and informing you that they would be conducting interviews with residents and their representatives and inviting you to participate if you wished.

The Assessors remained on site for 4 days and reviewed all 42 requirements of the 8 standards. The standards are:

1. Consumer Dignity and Choice
2. Ongoing Assessment and Planning with Consumers
3. Personal Care and Clinical Care
4. Services and Supports for daily Living
5. Organisation's Service Environment
6. Feedback and Complaints
7. Human Resources
8. Organisational Governance

They reviewed policies and procedures, reviewed our care management and clinical systems, reviewed all support services and interviewed staff, residents, families and the board chairman over the 4 days. The team also met with our management team once or twice a day to provide ongoing feedback of the process and to ask for any supporting information in areas they were reviewing.

The outcome was a 106 page interim report from the Assessment Team which we then had an opportunity to respond to before the final report was issued on 9 May this week.

It is extreme pleasure that we can convey that the Commission has determined that Illawarra Diggers has Met all 42 Requirements of the Standards and has reaccredited our home until 9 May 2025, the maximum three year term possible.

I write this letter to you all, as both residents and families and friends of our residents, to reinforce that every board member, staff member, allied health professional and volunteer at Illawarra Diggers has the wellbeing our residents as their singular purpose. The Commission found this reflected in all aspects of their review.

Being a home staffed by people to care for people, means that from time to time things will go wrong, expectations will not be met, experiences may fall short of the desired outcome. We will always welcome feedback from residents and their representatives, as well as our staff and other stakeholders, and will strive to ensure we provide the best service we can for our highly valued residents.

You will also no doubt be aware that Aged Care is a significant topic in this upcoming election. Aged Care organisations, including Illawarra Diggers, are joining forces with each other, with the unions and other relevant bodies to petition for better wages for our staff and more money to be allocated for the care of our aged community members, whether in residential or in home care. We need to be able to attract, train and retain the best people to work in this important sector. Today, a number of providers, are attending a rally at JJ Kelly Park to promote these issues. Illawarra Diggers are attending with a number of our residents who have volunteered to show their support for this most important issue.

Please help to ensure the care of our elderly community remains an important issue, not just at election time, and support initiatives to improve the system which the recent Royal Commission found to be lacking in so many areas.

I hope you find the great news regarding our reaccreditation assessment report as uplifting as we do.

If you have any questions about the Standards, the reaccreditation process or any other matter please contact either me or Chloe Darragh, our Business Manager.

Warm Regards



Peter Whittall

Chief Executive Officer